

Central Valley Vision 2006

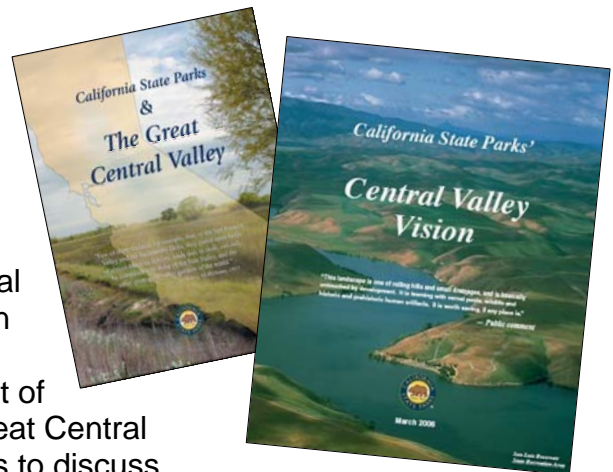
Findings and Recommendations

August 15, 2006



Executive Summary

During the fall of 2005, California State Parks concluded a year-long concerted effort to inform the public and collect comments and suggestions on its Central Valley Vision project. Nearly two dozen public and invited or small group meetings occurred. Largely these meetings resulted in general concurrence that California State Parks is moving in the right direction both in its acquisition and development policy decisions and in its assessment of park facilities, programs and services within the Great Central Valley. The intent of this internal project summary is to discuss findings and provide recommendations for next step actions.



The assessment concluded that there are significant resource and recreational opportunities and programs in the Central Valley through which State Parks can better serve the needs of Valley residents and visitors. Detailed recommendations can be found later on in this document. This report recommends State Parks undertakes the following actions:

1. Systematically assess and, if found appropriate, expand and improve park facilities and recreation programs at Central Valley State Park System units to accommodate the varied needs and interests of visitors and an increasingly changing Valley population.

2. Significantly expand recreational and interpretive opportunities, programs, and the preservation of resources, particularly those along river corridors.

3. Continue to provide quality recreation programs and interpretive activities and consider expanding these services depending on staffing availability at Central Valley park units.



4. Strengthen partnerships with non-profits, concession operators, and other public agencies to expand active and passive-use, park and recreation facilities, programs and services.

Introduction

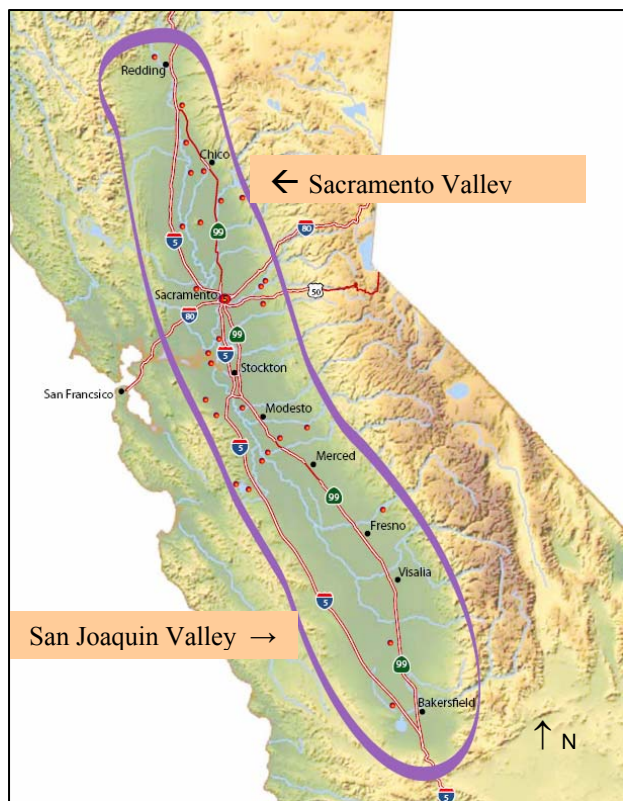
Through the guidance of Director Ruth Coleman, California State Parks began collecting information three years ago on the perceived gap of park and recreation services and opportunities in the Valley. It was believed that State Parks would be better able to guide park acquisition, development, and program activities over a 20-year planning horizon if staff had a better sense of Valley resident's interests, needs and desires.

An Oversight Committee was formed consisting of agency policy leaders, community activists, and State Park partners with an interest in planning and providing park and recreation facilities and services in the Central Valley. State Parks reviewed a variety of existing information and studies on the condition

of Valley units, demographic projections and recreational trends, proposed development projects, park unit General Plans, current regional and local planning, funding and partnering efforts.

An internal assessment was conducted on the 35 State Park Valley units, potential acquisitions and development efforts, and grant funding (i.e., Land and Water Conservation Fund, Proposition 12 and Proposition 40) for local park and recreation service providers administered by the Office of Grants and Local Services.

Using this information, two of the Department's Divisions, Planning and Natural Resources, published three documents; two were eight-page informational brochures that included a variety of maps (April 2004 and March 2006) and the other was an internal project report (April 2005) that elaborated on the analysis and recommendations for future actions. Combined, these documents outlined the recommended priorities identified in the planning process and recommended that State Parks undertake the following efforts to increase services at such time funding becomes available:



1. Recreation facilities: expand recreation facilities (camping, day use, fishing, boating, trails, and large group facilities) specifically along river corridors, Valley reservoirs and at the Delta.
2. River Corridors: expand landholdings and State Parks presence at existing units and acquire new parklands along river corridors, particularly where opportunities exist to link State Park units and other publicly owned lands.
3. Preserve and protect natural lands: acquire lands that preserve and protect threatened natural resources such as Blue Oak and Sycamore woodlands, and native grasslands.
4. Educate: better preserve and interpret the Valley's rich cultural history including agricultural history, Native American history and culture, and the history of water development, transportation, Highway 99, oil industry, immigrant workers and Dust Bowl refugees.



Background

The 20-year Central Valley Vision effort was initiated in April 2003, a time when much information was being published about the tremendous development pressures in the Valley. A team consisting of staff from the Natural Resources and Planning Divisions prepared an internal report and developed a brochure describing the effects that explosive population changes will have on the 18 central Valley counties. These counties in alphabetical order (part or all) are:



- Butte, Colusa, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Solano, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo and Yuba

The Central Valley State Park units from north to south are:

Shasta SHP	Prairie City SVRA
William B. Ide Adobe SHP	Stone Lakes (unclassified)
Woodson Bridge SRA	Delta Meadows (unclassified)
Bidwell-Sacramento River SP	Locke Boarding House
Bidwell Mansion SHP	Brannan Island SRA
Lake Oroville SRA	Frank's Tract SRA
Clay Pit SVRA	Bethany Reservoir SRA
Sutter Buttes SP	Caswell Memorial SP
Colusa-Sacramento River SRA	Carnegie SVRA
Woodland Opera House SHP	Turlock SRA
Folsom Lake SRA	McConnell SRA
Folsom Powerhouse SHP	George J. Hatfield SRA
State Capitol Museum (unclassified)	Great Valley Grasslands SP
Sutter's Fort SHP	Pacheco SP
State Indian Museum SHP	San Luis Reservoir SRA
Governor's Mansion SHP	Millerton Lake SRA
Old Sacramento SHP	Colonel Allensworth SHP
State Railroad Museum	Tule Elk SR
Leland Stanford Mansion SHP	

State Parks embarked on a long-range planning effort for the Central Valley to respond to phenomenal population growth and dramatic and far-reaching demographic changes. It is also believed that, compared to other California regions, Park and recreation service providers in the Central Valley received significantly less park bond funding and other financial support for the protection, development, and implementation of their programs, opportunities and related services. By collecting information on gaps in public demand for park and recreational services, and demand for specific services, State

Parks would be better able to guide park acquisition and development activities over a long planning horizon of 20 years.

To get a better understanding of how the population growth is affecting policy decisions, State Parks staff interviewed local policy leaders, met with community and non-profit group members, reviewed a wide variety of research materials, documents, and surveys, analyzed demographic and recreational trends, and reviewed proposed State Park acquisition and development projects, General Plans and regional planning efforts. Staff reviewed natural, cultural and recreational resources at both existing park units and those that have been proposed for acquisition consideration.



These efforts resulted in an initial brochure and internal report, both completed in April 2004, which highlighted the Department's Central Valley Vision. Following the release of these reports, Director Coleman issued a series of news releases and made public appearances announcing State Park's vision and committing the Department to an additional round of meetings to gather public comments on the vision and to solicit suggestions for improvements to it. These meetings occurred throughout the Valley in 2005.

In May 2006, Director Coleman held three press conferences to announce the newest brochure for the Central Valley Vision. The purpose of the new brochure was to summarize comments heard at the public meetings and identify steps to increase and improve services at Central Valley park units. A number of documents are included in the appendix of this report, including the two brochures, a compendium of public comments, maps, suggested acquisition areas of interest, and copies of news articles regarding press conferences that occurred throughout the scoping process.



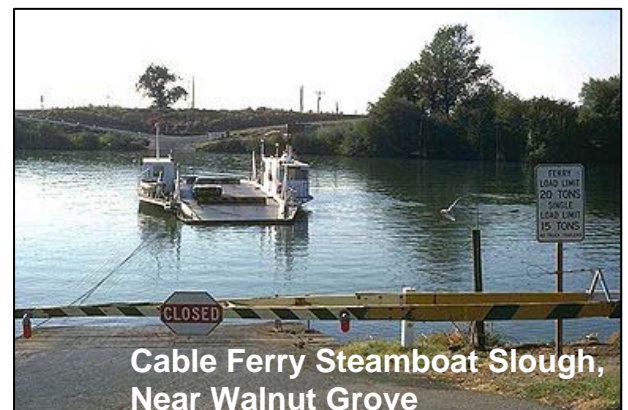
By meeting with the public and other stakeholders, and listening to their suggestions or concerns, it was theorized it would be possible to broaden the effort of sounding a consistent message to Central Valley residents: no longer is the Valley known only as the agricultural hub of California.

Instead, this significantly diverse region is home to several of the fastest growing counties and communities in California (and the window of opportunity to act before it's too late is quickly coming to a close). An example of this strong sense of urgency can be seen in communities like Tracy and Yuba City. These growing cities were once

thought to be outside of the mainstream for Bay Area commuters but are now considered to be within reasonable travel distances, something virtually unheard of 20 years ago.

Housing affordability and quality of life decisions such as the quality of schools and shopping availability are creating enormous demands for large scale housing and retail tracts in Central Valley communities like Tracy, Stockton, Marysville and Sacramento. Entire new communities, such as the 40,000 resident master planned community of Mountain House near Tracy are considered by planners and local officials to be Bay Area bedroom communities. To further exacerbate the situation, the construction of the new UC Merced campus and the tremendous growth occurring in once small agricultural cities and towns such as Atwater, Woodland, Kerman, Chowchilla and Hanford are taxing the ability for providers to keep pace with the demand for services – and valley residents are taking notice.

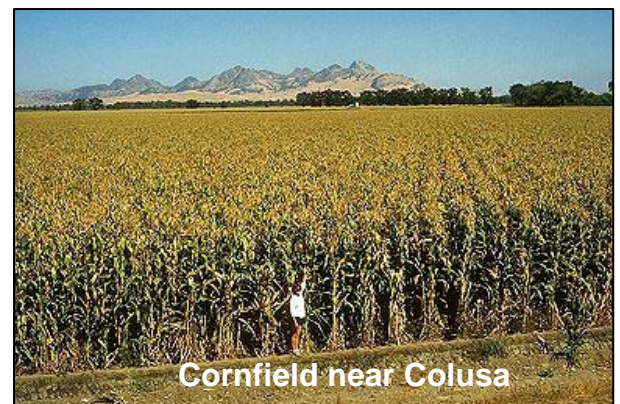
On June 28, 2006, in the Sacramento Bee, Valley Worried About Growth, staff writer Adam Ashton wrote: *“Increasing numbers of valley residents say they are concerned about growth and are willing to limit development to preserve agriculture and environmentally sensitive areas, according to a new survey from the Public Policy Institute of California.”*



Cable Ferry Steamboat Slough,
Near Walnut Grove



Delevan National Wildlife Refuge, Near Maxwell



Cornfield near Colusa

Demographic overview

According to the Department of Finance, 6.3 million people currently call the Valley their home. By 2040, the population is projected to reach nearly 12 million. New arrivals are attracted to the Valley for the relatively affordable cost-of-living and for quality-of-life factors such as affordable housing, jobs, recreation opportunities and schools. Urban growth within the Valley is projected to be an astounding 20 – 25% higher than in California coastal areas during this same time frame. With the sheer volume of additional residents come startling shifts in demographics. For example, the Hispanic population will more than double by 2020 and the population of Asian and Pacific Islander populations will nearly triple. And with these shifts in culture and age, come different interests and desires for different recreational opportunities.



Table 1 – Population Projections for Central Valley Counties by Ethnicity

Source: State of California, Department of Finance

	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
White	3,011,951	2,905,872	2,934,506	2,959,698	2,952,686	2,961,450
Hispanic	1,728,914	2,647,464	3,631,865	4,660,298	5,736,157	6,892,998
Asian/PI	456,638	655,259	863,418	1,060,231	1,205,261	1,333,484
Black	347,535	513,334	681,819	841,942	981,396	1,113,300
Multirace	183,309	314,688	454,675	589,642	699,028	795,825
Total Populations	5,728,347	7,036,617	8,566,283	10,111,811	11,574,528	13,097,057

Ethnicity changes are not the only significant demographic indicator. Many baby boomers have postponed parenthood until they are older resulting in a new baby boom today

On March 3, 2006, Dan Walters of the Sacramento Bee wrote:

*“The baby boom is producing more than a baby a minute...Population growth increases demand for housing, **parks**, water, transportation, schools and other forms of public infrastructure.”*

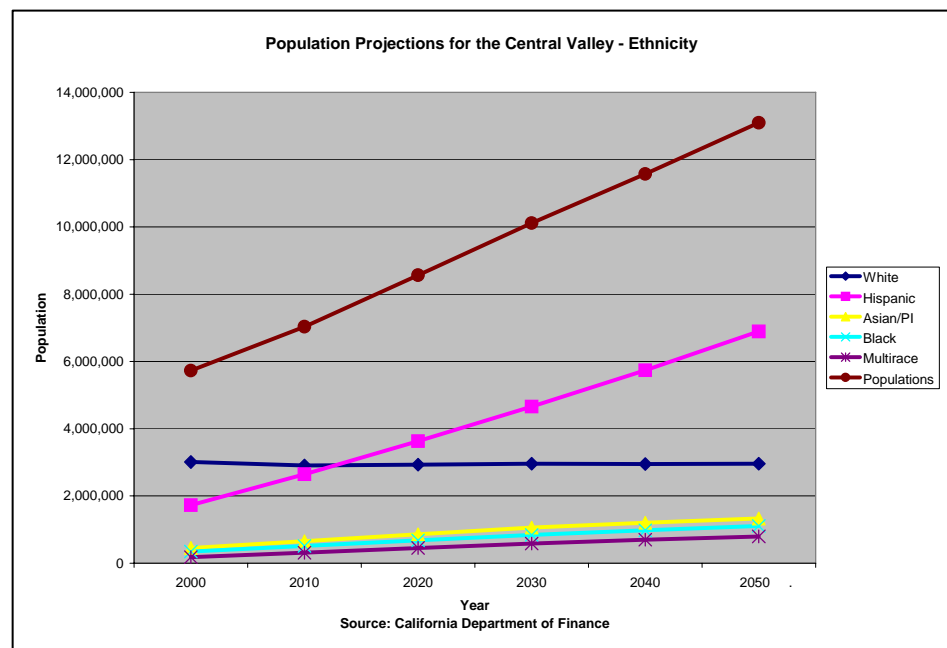


According to the Department of Finance, these same baby boomers are living longer and staying active later in life. California's senior population those 60-65 and older, will increase by 112% between 1990 and 2020. The oldest, age group represented by those 85 and older, will increase at an even faster rate. From 2030 to 2040, baby boomers will reach the age of 85 and the influence of these elders will be the strongest. This generation will have a dramatic impact on how park and recreation service providers are able to provide needed services.



In addition to growing older, Californians are also growing younger. Almost 40% of California households include children under 18. Younger Californians are more ethnically and culturally diverse, more technologically savvy, and demand more services, programs and opportunities.

New immigrants to the United States and to California do not have the familiarity or experience with the facilities, services, and programs State Parks has traditionally provided. Nor have they come from a public service or regulatory environment that provides them with the public involvement processes California uses. Immigrants typically do not come from a background where governmental service providers consistently ask them about their needs and interests.



Growth has tremendous implications to State Parks, particularly to Central Valley units, and creates a strong sense of urgency to act before it's too late. The predicted growth trends described above also may create an increase in recreation activities that currently are not considered to have high participation. These activities will grow in use because the sheer number of people projected will cause participation to rise. The combined pressure from both traditional forms of recreation use (e.g., trails, water-

based activities, camping and bike riding) and newer activities (e.g., geocaching, mountain biking, orienteering and bouldering) is creating conflict for State Park managers. Perhaps most importantly, given the changing age and ethnic structure of the Valley, State Parks has to be concerned about maintaining its relevance.

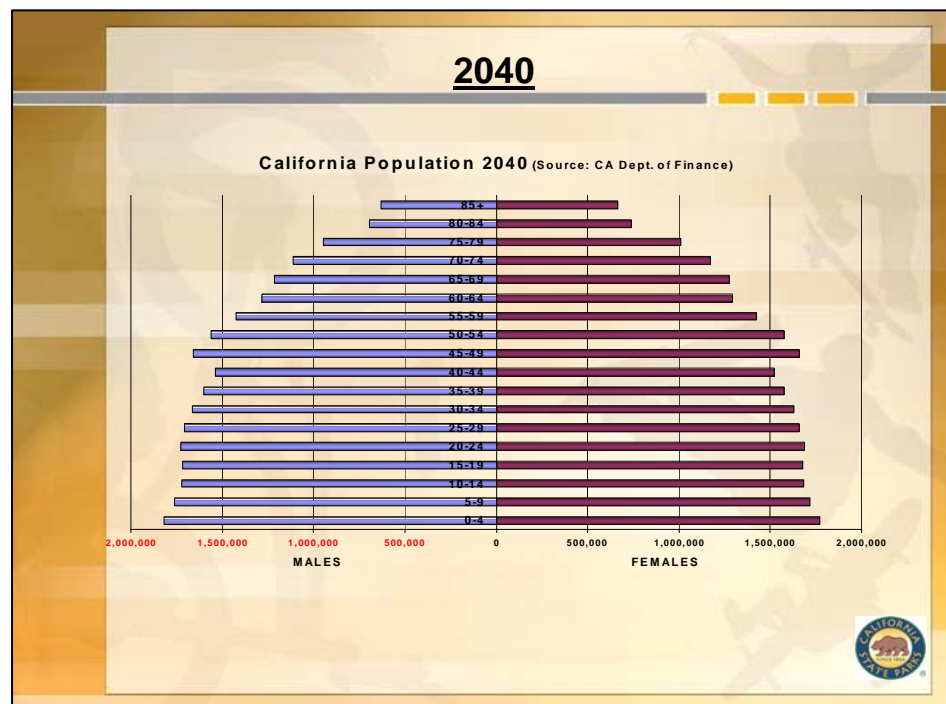
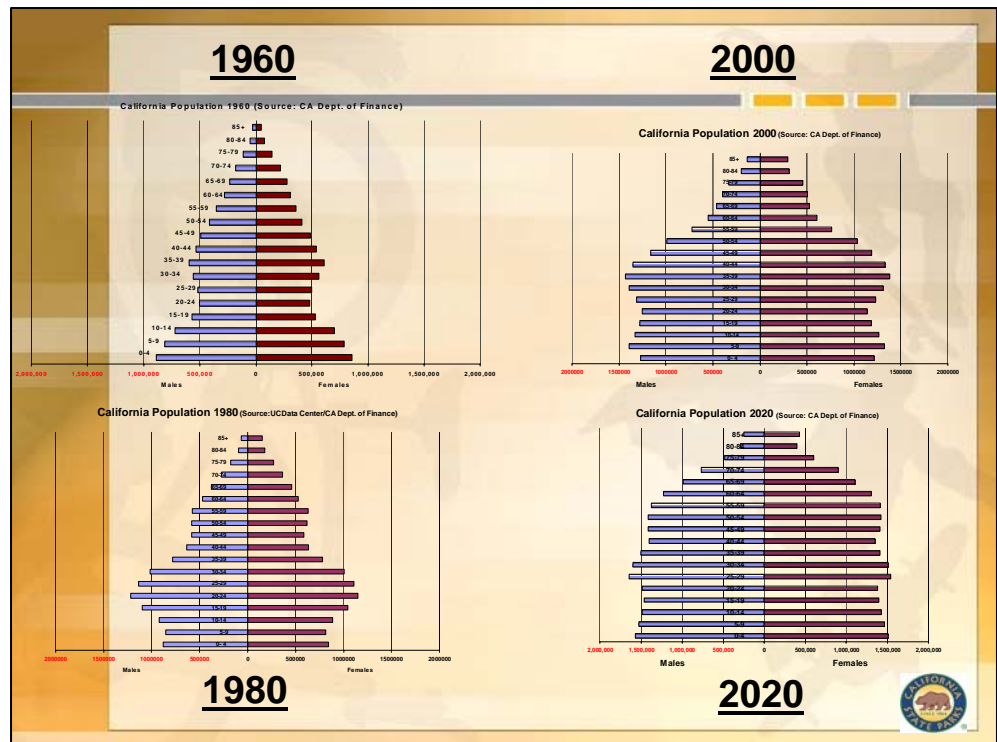
Table 2 – Central Valley Population by County, Population Increase Projections

Source: State of California, Department of Finance

<u>County</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2040</u>	<u>Percent of increase.</u> <u>From 2000 –</u> <u>2040</u>
Butte	204,672	260,730	282,492	38%
Colusa	18,923	26,337	32,449	71%
Fresno	803,401	1,114,654	1,476,699	84%
Glenn	26,718	31,950	37,182	39%
Kern	664,694	950,112	1,325,648	99%
Kings	129,823	184,751	252,762	95%
Madera	124,372	183,966	259,353	109%
Merced	210,876	360,831	528,788	151%
Sacramento	1,230,465	1,946,679	2,579,720	110%
San Joaquin	567,798	989,462	1,457,128	157%
Shasta	164,748	227,922	296,007	80%
Solano	396,784	555,264	751,782	89%
Stanislaus	449,777	653,841	843,523	88%
Sutter	79,464	111,856	139,805	76%
Tehama	56,042	68,323	80,640	44%
Tulare	369,355	543,749	754,790	104%
Yolo	169,882	271,040	363,663	114%
Yuba	60,553	84,816	112,097	85%

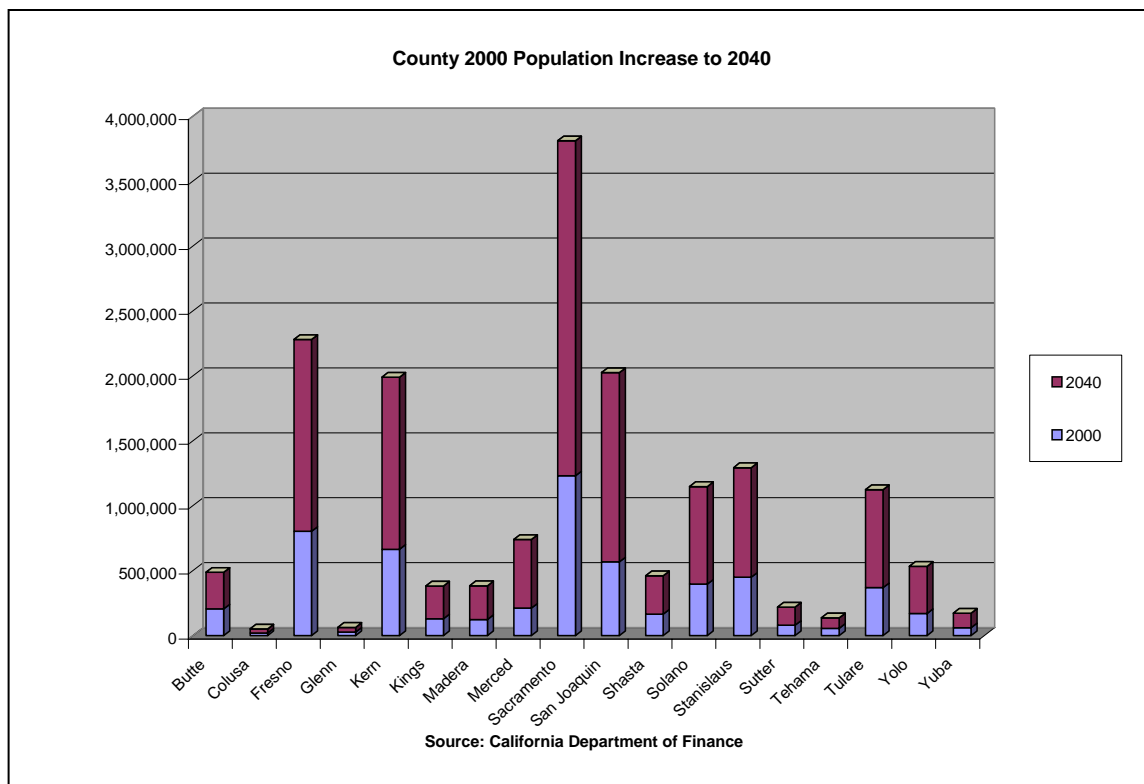
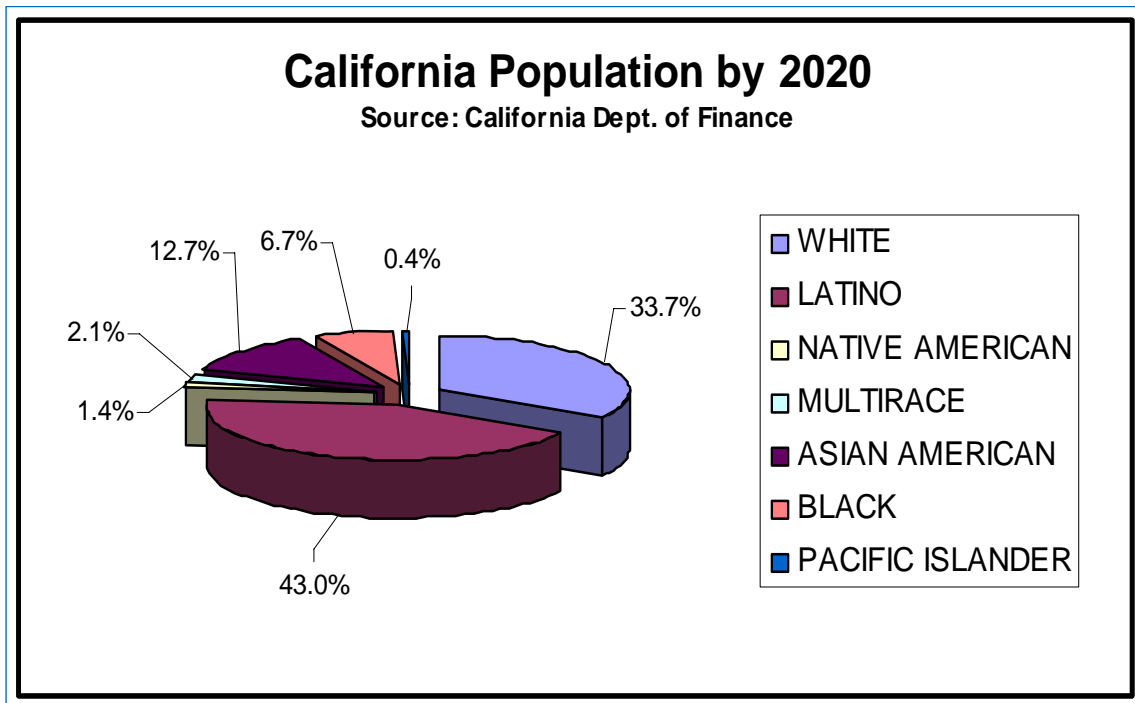


With the senior population increasing comes a longer retirement. More retirees are expected to be healthier and more affluent. “Older Americans, compared to 20 years ago, are showing substantially less disability, and that benefit applies to men and women. All of this speaks to an improved quality of life.” Richard Hordes, Director of the National Institute of Aging, Sacramento Bee, March 10, 2006. In addition, there will be a substantially different class of people than in previous generations. Seniors will be working less and are projected to be healthier and more affluent than previous generations. “In 1959, 35% of people over 65 lived in poverty. By 2003, that figure dropped to 10%. The proportion of older Americans with a high school diploma rose to 71.5% in 2003 from 17% in 1950.



With nearly five million of California’s households having children under 18 it is vital to recognize the importance of outdoor recreation opportunities for youth living in the Central Valley. Recreation is fundamental for children’s physical, mental, social and emotional well-being. Participating in outdoor recreation activities such as FamCamp,

Junior Lifeguards and PALS help to develop our youth, improve their education, and assist to deter negative behaviors. FamCamp is designed to encourage community groups and youth who may have minimal camping experience and lack outdoor equipment and is very popular at a variety of Central Valley State Park units including Lake Oroville SRA, Folsom Lake SRA, San Luis Reservoir SRA, and Millerton Lake SRA.



Analysis

The 35 State Park units located throughout the Central Valley comprise about 7% of the total State Park System across statewide. Of these, one-third of the Central Valley units are concentrated in the Sacramento region. Total annual visitation for 2003 through 2005 (the three year period of the Central Valley Vision effort) exceeded

16,000,000 visitors or roughly 6.7% of the total State Park system attendance of 241,218,000 visitors. According to a voluntary visitor entrance survey, roughly half of all Central Valley park visitors live in the Central Valley, with about 35-40% coming from elsewhere within California and 10-12% visiting from outside California. The majorities of visitors are predominantly white, middle-aged and fall into the middle income bracket. It should be noted that this survey relied on visitors voluntarily completing and turning in the survey forms and cannot be considered statistically accurate. People with lower incomes, the young and elderly, as well as people of color may be undercounted in these surveys.

The range of Central Valley Park units is impressive. One-third of State Park units with boating use and one-fourth of the State Park System's off-highway vehicle recreation parks are located in the Central Valley. However the southern section of the San Joaquin Valley has relatively few State Park opportunities compared to the northern portion of the Valley.

Roughly half of the park units in the Central Valley are focused on cultural heritage subjects such as Shasta SHP, Col. Allensworth SHP, the Folsom Powerhouse SHP, the State Railroad Museum and the recently refurbished Leland Stanford SHP.

Valley units have a wide variety of natural resources including Delta Meadows, Caswell Memorial, Great Valley Grasslands and Sutter Buttes. Rich farmland and riparian habitat serves as winter habitat for migratory birds along the Pacific Flyway. In addition, increasingly rare habitat that provides shelter for federally threatened and endangered



Modesto Public Meeting, Great Valley Center, Sept. 20, 2005



species, such as the San Joaquin Kit Fox and the California Tiger Salamander, can be found in Valley units.

Findings from Public Outreach Meetings:

Staff conducted more than two dozen public and small group meetings up and down the Valley over the three year period. Feedback and suggestions by Valley residents were collected and posted on the State Parks' web site, www.parks.ca.gov.

At the public meetings, staff asked several questions for public input about the direction that the Central Valley Vision effort should take: These questions included the following:

- What is important in the Central Valley that should be protected and interpreted as a unit of the State Park System before it is lost?
- Which natural, historical and cultural resources and features should be protected before they vanish?
- What special stories need to be told and where are the places that need to be protected in order to tell these stories?
- What recreational facilities of the kind found in State Parks should be developed and where?



The public was encouraged to provide suggestions and feedback on the Central Valley Vision effort. A complete listing of their comments can be found in the Appendix but a summary is provided in the seven themes below. Note that some items occur for more than one theme.

1. Strong interest for river access, including:
 - a. fishing areas

- b. boat ramps and entrance and staging areas for motorized and non-motorized water recreation
 - c. water trails and water front trails (with interpretive signage and maps, if possible)
 - d. swimming and water play areas
 - e. day-use facilities adjacent to access areas, such as picnic facilities, comfort stations, shade structures and barbecue areas
 - f. nature study and wildlife viewing areas along river corridors
- 2. Requests for additional State Park lands, including:
 - a. transfers of county, city and non-profit facilities to State Parks for operation and maintenance
 - b. river front properties, especially those that link with other public lands
 - c. timely purchases before costs become prohibitively expensive
 - d. oak and sycamore woodland habitat and riparian preservation
 - e. various locations of specific interest rather than statewide interest
 - f. open space, such as working farms developed through implementation of conservation easements and the Williamson Act
- 3. Need for increased agency assistance (Organizations requested that State Parks consider assuming responsibility of regional facilities):
 - a. extend interagency partnerships and cooperative efforts
 - b. expand concession opportunities
 - c. link State Park properties to other public agency holdings
- 4. Requests for varied recreation opportunities including:
 - a. settings for nature study and photography
 - b. museums and visitor centers
 - c. trail facilities and staging areas
 - d. open turf areas for kite flying, games and pet walking
 - e. geocaching
 - f. off-highway vehicle areas that include both camping and day use amenities
 - g. recreation programs and services
- 5. High interest in increasing and updating camping and day use facilities:
 - a. provide for large groups such as extended family units (picnic areas, shade structures, barbecue areas, and comfort stations)
 - b. alternative camping facilities such as tent cabins, RV hook-ups, and yurts



- c. additional sitting areas (benches and picnic tables)
- 6. Requests for additional trails with an emphasis on:
 - a. trails that have interpretive signs, and maps or brochures for educational purposes
 - b. multi-use trails that can accommodate horses, bikes, and foot traffic
 - c. areas and trails that can accommodate off-highway vehicles
 - d. water trails for small boats such as canoes rafts and kayaks
 - e. accessibility for all users regardless of physical ability
- 7. Demand for increased education and interpretation of the Valley's interesting and varied resources and history including:
 - a. Native American history and culture
 - b. stories about immigrants
 - c. economic importance of agriculture, including farm labor and the related story about water resources and use
 - d. impact of water development use
 - e. role of the Chinese in building levees and their participation in the Gold Rush
 - f. waterways as transportation corridors, for example the Sacramento River from San Francisco through the Delta to Sacramento
 - g. regionalized history and stories surrounding Highway 99 corridor
 - h. Dust Bowl migration story
 - i. paleontological educational opportunities
 - j. oil industry
 - k. visitor centers, displays, signs, kiosks, brochures, and programs in multiple languages

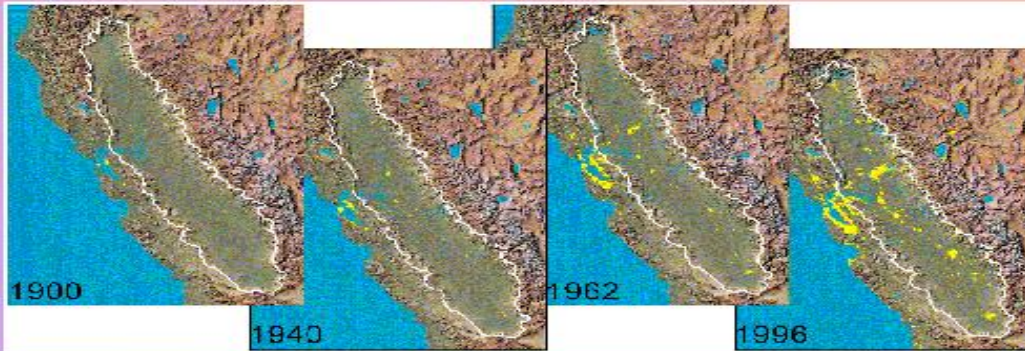
Public comment from these meetings has been captured and is listed in detail in the appendix of this document. Recommendations reflect a careful review of these comments and the direction from Department policy leaders.

A list of workshops and meeting locations include:

Woodland	Madera
Fresno	Red Bluff
Sacramento	Modesto
Chico	Stockton
Isleton	Atwater
Bakersfield	



Urban Growth: California Central Valley



Data source: USGS map archives; USGS Urban Dynamics Program

As the pressures of growth continues to strain public agencies, those organizations charged with providing planning, utilities, and transportation struggle to provide public services. Main transportation corridors such as Highway 99, Interstate 5, and Highway 50 are being redesigned and altered to meet the crush of commuters, travelers and transportation carriers. Alarmed by the pace and direction of growth, non-profit land trust groups are forming and growing to address the rapid decline of natural and cultural resources. They are partnering with agencies like the State Office of Historic Preservation and the Department of Fish and Game for technical assistance and grant funding for the acquisition and operation of a variety of public lands and facilities.

While some progress has been made in the past three years since the inception of the State Parks Central Valley Vision effort, it is unclear whether these gains may be overshadowed by the impact of the Valley's dramatic population and growth both realized and predicted. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that there is much to be done in a region that has traditionally viewed parklands and open space as a low priority compared to other regions of the state. As row crops and orchards increasingly make way for mass housing tracts, shopping malls and commercial centers, the dilemma can be summed up in the following quote from Stockton horse breeder and developer Fritz Grupe appearing in article reprinted by the Great Valley Center, October 1998, Modesto Bee, *"If your farming return is \$2,000 to \$3,000 per acre, and a developer offers you \$40,000 an acre, what are you going to do?"*.

As noted earlier, cultural-based communities are being urbanized at the expense of infrastructure. Growth threatens farmland, the environment (water, open space and natural and cultural resources), and increases social and fiscal disparities. In the very near future, once small and mid-size communities such as Redding, Red Bluff, Stockton, Modesto, Tracy, Madera and Merced are going to become major urban areas. With these changes comes an increased demand for open space and access to cultural, natural, and recreational resources.



In the internal report of April 2004, 22 areas were identified as being of significant interest to State Parks. The sites ranged from the Sacramento River and the Highway 99 corridor, to a new State Vehicular Recreation Area near Bakersfield. It was found these geographic polygons reflected State Parks acquisition guidelines. Two additional sites were added after the release of the internal report (Orestimba Watershed and the Panoche Valley). Dunnigan Hills was further evaluated and determined to no longer be viable. The existing acquisition guidelines consist of eight strategies that, with minor adjustments, could be modified to include properties within the Central Valley. The eight acquisition strategies focus on:

- Expanded Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
- Cultural Landscapes and Corridors
- Significant Cultural Resource Properties
- Sustainable Ecosystems
- Unique Natural Resource Areas
- Trail Connections and Corridors
- Urban Initiative Acquisitions
- In-holdings and Adjacent Properties

From a recreation perspective, given the linear nature of the Valley, publicly accessible parkways that offer multi-use trails and greenways adjacent to river corridors would be important, especially to the burgeoning populations in nearby communities. Properties that offer multiple opportunities for recreation, such as those that are water based, camping, informative for the visitor (i.e., museums, visitor centers) and hiking trails were determined to be essential, especially as Valley residents know how stifling hot it gets in the summer months. Properties that connect to other publicly managed lands or which

are in close proximity to existing park units were also important to the decision making process.

Staff reviewed suggestions for historic areas of interest, unique properties that provided cultural landscapes and corridors, and those that could “tell a story” about trade routes, migrant farm workers, and the importance of water to Valley agricultural providers. From a natural resources perspective, it was confirmed by numerous public statements that the Valley has a rich range of opportunities, especially those that could tie in to existing



Valley units. Those properties that provide unique geomorphic features or have a rare or unique habitat type are of particular interest to State Parks.

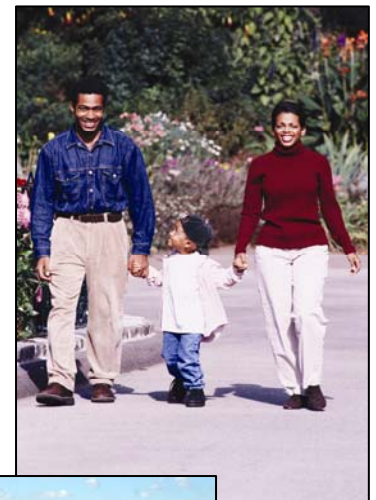
California State Parks maintains an acquisition Multi-Year Capital Outlay

Program (MYCOP) list of properties that have been screened for Central Valley applicability. The current Proposition 40 Acquisition Priority List was screened for Central Valley suggested properties and a revised list of acquisition areas of interest was subsequently developed and is provided in the Appendix.

State Park General Plans

State Park unit General Plans dictate the use and scope of development at the specific park unit and can take up to two years or longer to complete. A new updated General Plan will result in a plan of action for the park unit and will be used to guide the protection of natural and cultural resources, provide for and manage recreational opportunities; and outline the future development of public facilities. This guidance is essential to the Department's managers and staff and is of value to those organizations and individuals who have a substantial interest in the State Park System. The Central Valley units and the status of their General Plans are as follows (asterisk denotes that a General Plan does not exist):

Bethany Reservoir SRA – approved 1973
Bidwell Mansion SHP – approved 1983
Bidwell-Sacramento River SP – in progress
Brannan Island SRA – approved 1987



Carnegie SVRA –1981
 Caswell Memorial SP – approved 1969
 Clay Pit SVRA*
 Colonel Allensworth SHP – approved 1976
 Colusa-Sacramento River SRA – 1957
 Delta Meadows River Park*
 Folsom Lake SRA – 1979
 Folsom Powerhouse SHP – 1979
 Franks Tract SRA – approved 1987
 George J. Hatfield SRA*
 Great Valley Grasslands SP*
 Lake Oroville – in progress
 Leland Stanford Mansion SHP – approved 1989
 McConnell SRA*
 Millerton Lake SRA – approved 1983
 Old Sacramento SHP – 1970
 Pacheco SP – in progress
 Prairie City SVRA – approved 1991
 San Luis Reservoir SRA – in progress
 Shasta SHP – 1992
 State Capitol Museum*
 State Railroad Museum*
 Stone Lakes*
 Sutter Buttes*
 Sutter's Fort SHP/Indian Museum – 1990
 Tule Elk SR – 1958
 Turlock Lake SRA*
 William B. Ide Adobe SHP – approved 1990
 Woodland Opera House SHP – approved 1980
 Woodson Bridge SRA*



Recommendations for Future Actions:

The common denominator woven throughout this report and the entire complex Central Valley Vision effort is the incredible pace of growth and projected change in the Valley. The Valley is in the midst of profound and far-reaching demographic, economic and social change brought on by growth. More and more orchards and row crops are being converted into shopping malls, roads and housing tracts. This is increasingly evident to anyone driving north along Highway 99 from Bakersfield to Stockton. Where there were once small fruit stands set in a rural, agricultural environment, today will be found part of the crush of development as urban city limit lines expand farther and farther from urban core areas. Resource lands and facilities once thought of as being too far out for the urban reaches are now discovered and reportedly “being loved to death” as they see increased and intense visitation.” The demand for open space lands, public recreation access areas and opportunities for a multitude of recreational and educational activities is exponentially increasing as the population grows and the Valley becomes little different than the rest of California. Unfortunately, public agencies have not been able to keep up with public demand for lands, services and facilities, updated infrastructure, and day-to-day operations and maintenance of existing sites. A commonly noted suggestion collected from the public workshops is the hope that California State Parks will consider taking over the operations and maintenance of local and regional park facilities.



Of the \$1 billion in statewide population-based funding from Propositions 12 and 40,



public entities in the Central Valley were allocated \$161 million or 16% of the total. Sacramento and Fresno accounted for 38% of the population-based funds. Of the competitive programs, Central Valley counties received \$80 million in competitive funds, representing 23% of the total \$353 million statewide. Additional information about local agency grant funding can be found in Appendix VI, VII, VIII, IX and X.

State Parks' Central Valley Vision is an ambitious strategy to identify current and near-term Department-wide actions to meet the public's needs through a renewed effort to build economic and volunteer partnerships, park developments, upgrade facilities and

possibly acquire new park lands. Although there are no funds currently available for

large-scale implementation of the Central Valley Vision, Director Coleman's goal is to prepare for such a time when funding becomes available. The Vision has been a starting point for discussion about crafting language for future fund sources and it will continue to serve as a guide for future State Park programs, services, and acquisition and development projects throughout the Valley.

The assessment concluded that there are significant resources and recreational opportunities in the Central Valley through which State Parks can better serve the needs of residents and visitors. These needs can be met through an assertive program involving the development of recreation facilities at new and existing units to better serve an increasingly diverse population of recreation enthusiasts, acquisition of key lands to both round out existing boundaries and provide landscape corridors of Central Valley state park units and others to enhance the state park system, and through the provision of additional educational and recreational programs and activities. The summary report suggests recommendations for future action. It is expected that additional actions and projects supportive of State Parks' Central Valley Vision will be undertaken as funding becomes available.



Sacramento Marina Existing Berths

Recommended Actions in the Central Valley:

The summary report recommends State Parks undertake the following actions:



Stanislaus River, Caswell State Park

1. Systematically assess active and passive recreation opportunities in vicinities of major Central Valley communities and, if found appropriate, expand and improve park facilities at Valley units to accommodate varied needs and interests of an increasingly changing Valley population.
- State Parks will soon update its MYCOP to reflect current conditions and demands, and identify future objectives. The MYCOP will determine how to effectively allocate potential funds such as those from a future park bond act. For example, these funds could be used to improve and expand camping

facilities at Caswell SP or for the expansion of river access and day use facilities to the Sacramento River at Colusa-Sacramento River SRA.

2. Significantly expand recreational opportunities, programs and services and preserve resources particularly along river corridors while strengthening partnerships with other public land owners such as the Department of Water Resources, Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Fish and Game.

- Complete a study of the identified rivers and watershed corridors noted in the Central Valley Vision and place them in priority order. Ranking criteria might include: proximity to urban centers; connectivity to existing State Park System units and/or facilities administered by other public agencies; quality of natural, cultural and/or recreational resources; variety of possible recreation facilities/programs; public access, summer water quantity and quality; willing partners, size of parcel suitable for State Park ownership; and ease of development, operations and maintenance.



The first Central Valley Vision report identified four rivers of interest – the Stanislaus River (Sierra foothills to Caswell Memorial SP), Tuolumne River (La Grange to Modesto), Merced River (Snelling to George J. Hatfield SRA), and the San Joaquin River (Friant dam to five miles east of Highway 41). Public workshops conducted since State Parks released its April 2004 report asked that State Parks add the Kings, Kern, the lower San Joaquin Rivers, and the Kaweah as well.

3. Continue to provide quality recreation programs and interpretive activities and possibly expand these services depending on staffing availability at Central Valley park units.

- Assess unit programs to see if they could be increased, improved or expanded. Programs such as FamCamp and Park PALS could be used to enrich the lives of many Valley residents.

4. Focus staff efforts on developing new partnerships and strengthening existing relationships with non-profit organizations, concession operators, and public agencies to expand active and passive use facilities, programs, and services.

- Efforts should be made after the rivers assessment study is completed to partner with those stakeholders that have a vested interest in those rivers. State Parks is particularly interested in studying. Concession operators such as small boat rentals, businesses or food concessionaires should be considered for appropriate park units that would benefit from this type of business operation.

The public workshops elicited a significant number of recommendations for the Department to acquire additional lands to be included ultimately as units of the State Park System. While a number of these recommendations are clearly of more local or regional significance, there were a variety of suggested acquisitions that merit study for their possible inclusion in the State Park System. However, such analysis is beyond the scope of this report and will have to wait until additional resources can be allocated for their assessment.

The Central Valley Vision effort has placed this important geographic region of the state at the forefront of its policy deliberations. An example of this can be seen in how the Vision's priorities and goals are reflected in the Strategic Initiatives, the Department Acquisition Review Team guidelines, and MYCOP.

The Vision will further assist State Parks to achieve its statewide mission while assisting in meeting the localized needs of Valley residents as they grapple with explosive growth and crushing infrastructure demands. The Vision has been a starting point for discussions about crafting language for future funding sources and it will continue to serve as a roadmap for future State Park programs.



Central Valley Vision Scope Concept for a River Assessment Study

Funding should be sufficient to assign two staff persons to work on this project for a three month period.

Issue: Four river corridors are identified in the Department's Central Valley Strategy, however, at the time the Strategy was developed, the four rivers were identified separately and none were given a higher priority relative to the others. As the Department seeks to place all Valley proposals into priority order, the question becomeswhat is the acquisition priority for the rivers identified in the Department's Central Valley Vision?

Background: The Department's April 2004 Central Valley Strategy report recommends 21 "Areas of Significant Interest for Acquisition." Included among these 21 "significant areas" are four Valley rivers (not counting the Sacramento River corridor and riparian lands from Battle Creek to Colusa, the Orestimba Creek watershed, or the Cosumnes River / Deer Creek Hills area). These four rivers include the Stanislaus River (Sierra foothills to Caswell Memorial SP), Tuolumne River (La Grange to Modesto), Merced River (Snelling to George J. Hatfield SRA), and San Joaquin River (Friant dam to five miles east of Highway 41). Public workshops conducted since the Department released its strategy have asked the Department to add the Kings, Kern and lower San Joaquin rivers (and probably the Mokelumne River) to its "Areas of Significant Interest" as well. To date, the Department has not committed itself to these requested additions.

More recently, the Department has been asked what the priorities are among the 21 listed projects. Additionally, the Department may wish to be in a position to act quickly on its highest priority acquisitions in the event a future park bond act is passed or some other source of funding becomes available for acquisition purposes. Taken as a group, the four (or seven) Valley rivers rate as high priority for acquisition purposes. However, before the Department acts, it should know which among the several rivers should receive the greatest attention, and consider dropping others due to overriding negative factors.

Assessment: The Department will need to conduct an assessment of each of the proposed Valley rivers in order to place them in priority order. The assessment should be based on the approach shown on the following page. Following the assessment, the rivers should be ranked using criteria developed in step IB. Such ranking criteria might include: proximity to population centers; connectivity to existing State Park System units and/or the lands of other public agencies; quality of natural, cultural and/or recreational resources; multiple recreation facilities / activities possible; summer water quantity and quality; willing sellers / available parcels; size of parcels suitable for State Park ownership; ease of development / operation; and etc.

I. Background Research / Data Collection

- A. Review existing maps, aerial photographs, reports, acquisition documents, ownership reports, etc. (see Tools below)
- B. Develop project ranking criteria
- C. Refine site evaluation forms
- D. Determine patterns of public land ownership for each river to be studied; determine approximate distance off river to be studied, e.g. use distance of average widest point along the American River Parkway.
- E. Identify significant stakeholders and partnership opportunities; i.e., other public land managers with connections to the rivers, local land conservancies, local park and recreation departments, and county planning depts.
- F. Identify the range of what it is we want; e.g., contiguous public or protected ownership along entire river; a series of rafting put-in / take out points along a river; a stand-alone park unit of significant size including a variety of resource and recreation attractions; etc. (also see suggestion in 1D above).
- G. Tools that should be considered for assessment:
 - i. Digital APN, county zoning, GP designation maps
 - ii. GIS layers-public ownership, FRAP vegetation, UCD/ICE program river reach characterization.
 - iii. Photography-AP 9x9, satellite imagery, or best available next year Fed. Dept of Ag high resolution 2005 flights.
 - iv. Bureau of Reclamation-valley change detection program,
 - v. DFG, Fresno region-sport fishing assessment
 - vi. UCD river specialist, Peter Moyle, consultation.

II. District Level Evaluation

- A. Meet with District Superintendent / District staff to get their assessment
- B. Meet with significant stakeholders

III. On-site Evaluations

- A. Review the river corridors on-site, include time of year?
- B. Determine resource quality and characteristics for suitability as a State Park; document, possibly using aerial photo and overlays.
- C. Assess probable parcel location, size, availability, etc. for acquisition potential
- D. Assess connectivity to closest State Park or other public agency “anchor”